THE TOWER

WITH LEGENDS AND LYRICS

EMMA HUNTINGTON NASON

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THE TOWER

WITH LEGENDS AND LYRICS

BY

EMMA HUNTINGTON NASON

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THE TOWER

I AM the tower of Belus — the tower of old
am I!
Under the rifting lines of the gloaming's trem-
ulant sky,
Under the shifting signs of the ages circling by,
I stand in the might of the mighty — the tower
of Belus, I!
Who are these at my feet like pygmies scorched
in the sun?
Who, but the petty hordes of a race that has
just begun?
It matters little to me whether prince or Bed-
ouin stand,
Or the lizard creep at my feet, or the jackal
up from the sand!
What does the time-bound traveler know of the
dim by-gone?
What can he tell of the glory that died with
the world's bright dawn,
More than the son of the desert? the slim,
green creeping things?

The night-owl, fast in his crevice? the bat, with his ghostly wings?
Each in his own way imagines the past and the yet-to-be;
Each to himself is greatest; equal alike to me!
I am the tower of Belus; ages unnumbered are mine;
Mightier I than the gods who dreamed themselves divine!

Is this the grandest of rivers that rolled like a king to the sea,
Crying, "I am the great Euphrates! bring all your tithes unto me"?
How the ships with their treasured freight went down to their rocky bed!
Are there ghouls, insatiate still, with grinning mouths to be fed,
That you burst your stony embankments, ravaging meadow and fen,
Making drearier drear desolation, in scorn for the arts of men?
Ah! Babylonia, where — ah! where is thy fruitful plain,
Spreading sea-like unto the ocean its billowy fields of grain?

Where now is the mighty city, secure with its
brazen gates,
And walls on whose towering fastness the Assy-
rian warrior waits,
His milk-white steeds in war-gear, his blazoned
flags unfurled,
Hurling with grim defiance his challenge out
to the world?
Where are the toiling millions who wrought,
with their cunning skill,
Sweet dreams of a fair ideal, in forms that were
fairer still?
Oh, Babylon's looms are silent; in silence
dead are the plains;
And dead are city and soldier; the tower
alone remains.

I am the tower of Belus! I stand in the grasp
of fate!
I, and proud Babylon's princess; together we
watch and wait,
She for her lover's returning; I for oblivion's
knell;
And which with the greater longing, the heav-
ens alone can tell.
Is there any joy in existence void of hope or
of fears,

In painless, slow dissolution through thousands
of weary years?
Or rest for the ghost of the maiden that alike
in life and in death,
While years into centuries ripen, and centuries
wane, keeps faith?
She counts not night nor morning, but each
new moon to greet,
She cometh with shadowy garments whose per-
fume, subtle and sweet,
From balms forever forgotten, floats over her
lover's low bed,
Where he, impatient, is sleeping the sleep of
the restless dead.
For had he not said, "Beloved, come at the
mystical hour,
When the young moon lightens with silver the
shade of the mighty tower"?
Had he not sworn, "Though I perish! though
Belus lie in the dust!"—
And the trust of a loving woman is blind and
unending trust.

Three hands were joined at their parting, three
voices breathing love's breath;

The voice of the third was ghostly, its hand
was the hand of death :
And the white stone goddess had shivered while
the glow of the sunset dyes
Deepened in one broad blood-streak and
blazed in the western skies ;
But the maid, unheeding the omen, hears only
her lover's last oath,
Nor dreams that his life has been purchased
with this, as he dieth for both.
The grave that is reeking with vengeance no tale
of its mystery brings :
Gods ! — he was a Tyrian soldier ! she, the
daughter of kings !
And what but death can be reckoned as price
of unequal love ?
And what but the vow, recorded by direful
fates above,
Could save the life of the maiden ? — the vow
that never again,
While the tower of mighty Belus o'ershadows
the haunts of men,
With its ancient and storied grandeur — ay,
more ! that never the while
One upright stone shall be standing alight with
the young moon's smile,

Shall body or ghost of the soldier under its shadow wait: —
But death is longer than life-time; and love is stronger than fate!

There were hope e'en yet for the tower, standing stark and alone,
Had the flames of an altar-fire e'er burned in its heart of stone;
Had the depths of its adamant bosom e'er thrilled with a love or hate,
Stern destiny's grip must have slackened, slackened sooner or late.
I am the tower of Belus! Can the story be written, "I was"?
Shall the tide of an ended existence flow back to the primal cause
Which sent it first into being? and records of age sublime
In utter nothingness vanish under the finger of time?
Hist! a jar in the ragged brickwork! it totters, and now is still;
I can feel the sand slow trickling, with a cold unearthy thrill;
Perchance but a stone is falling — perchance it is death's last throe —

Ay! under the young moon's glitter I catch the
roseate glow
Of the maiden's royal mantle; and the clang of
a mailèd tread
Tells that the past has canceled its debt which
held the dead.
He cometh with step triumphant! he readeth
the fateful sign:
The last grim arch is shattered which linked
their lot with mine.

Ah, fate, to the last relentless! thy vassal
allegiance owns —
Go back to your cities, O stranger! write,
"Belus a heap of stones!"

BODY AND SOUL.

Here at life's silent, shadowy gate,
O Soul, my Soul, I lie and wait;
Faint in the darkness, blind and dumb,
O Soul, my promised comrade, come!

The morn breaks gladly in the east;
Hush! hark! the signs of solemn feast;
The softened footstep on the stair;
The happy smile, the chant, the prayer;
The dainty robes, the christening bowl —
'T is well with Body and with Soul.

Why lingerest thou at dawn of life?
Seest not a world with pleasure rife?
Hear'st not the song and whir of bird?
The joyous leaves to music stirred?
Thou too shalt sing and float in light;
My Soul, thou shalt be happy — quite.

But yet so young and such unrest?
Thou must be glad, my glorious guest!

Here is the revel, here is mirth;
Here strains enchanting sway the earth; —
Measures of joy in fullness spent;
My Soul, thou canst but be content.

Is this a tear upon my hand?
A tear? I do not understand.
Ripples of laughter, and a moan?
Why sit we thus apart, alone?
Lift up thine eyes, O Soul, and sing!
He comes, our lover, and our king!
Feel how each pulse in rapture thrills!
Look, at our feet the red wine spills!
And he — he comes with step divine,
A spirit meet, O Soul, for thine.

Body and Soul's supremest bliss —
What, dost thou ask for more than this?

Stay, here are houses, lands, and gold;
Here, honor's hand; here, gains untold;
Drink thou the full cup to the lees;
Drink, Soul, and make thy bed in ease.
Thou art my prisoner; thou, my slave;
And thou *shalt* sip wherein I lave.

Nay? nay? Then there are broader fields,
Whose luring path a treasure yields;
Thou shalt the universe explore,
Its heights of knowledge, depths of lore;
Shalt journey far o'er land and sea;
And I, my Soul, will follow thee;
Will follow — follow — but I lag;
My heart grows faint, my footsteps flag.

And there are higher, holier things?
Is this a taunt thy spirit flings?
What is it, Soul, that thou wouldst say?
Thou erst had time to fast and pray.
Give me one word, one loving sign,
For this spent life of yours and mine!

I held thee fast by sordid ties?
I trailed thy garments, veiled thine eyes?
Go on, I come: but once did wait,
O Soul, for thee, at morning's gate.
Canst thou not pause to give me breath?
Perchance this shadow, Soul, is death.
I stumble, fall; it is the grave;
I am the prisoner; I the slave;
And thou, strange guest, for aye art free;
Forgive me, Soul! I could but be

The earth that soiled, the fleshly clod,
The weight that bound thee to the sod.

Dust unto dust! I hear the knell;
And yet, O Soul, I loved thee well!

TWO FACES.

When that enchanted tapestry unrolls
The pictures wrought in old Homeric song,
Where heroes wrestle with their dual souls
Who, born of gods, do yet to earth belong;

Where white-armed women ply the wondrous looms,
While long-haired Greek or crested Trojan falls;
Where desolation sits in lofty rooms,
And old men weep upon the fated walls;

Where skies are red with glare of burning pile,
Of cities sacked, of beakëd ships aflame;
Where gods insatiate bend with awful smile,
Above the countless hecatombs of slain;

Where that superb procession of the past
Sweeps through the ages, and with noiseless tread

Marches and countermarches, till at last
I seem myself to stand among the dead ;

Then two young faces, vivid and intense,
Enthrall my spirit wheresoe'er I turn ;
Two visions sweet of girlish innocence,
Of eyes that shine, of cheeks that pale and burn.

And them I follow through the fitful light
That weirdly shifts o'er human grief and joy,
E'en as they follow, from her chamber white,
The Argive Helen to the walls of Troy.

Silent they watch, with widely wondering eyes,
Her tender tears at Menelaus' name,
Discerning there that olden sad surprise,
Immortal beauty and immortal shame.

Silent they wait, these maids-in-waiting sweet:
What sudden thoughts within your bosoms stir,
O mute companions, as at Helen's feet,
Ye watch the life-tide ebb and flow for her?

What part have ye in jealousy and hate,
In love and loss and sin's unseemly woe?
Alas! Of all the mysteries of fate,
There is not one ye shall not live to know!

Across life's web the shuttle rainbow-hued
No more henceforth can send its stainless thread;
A dull red seam, with this day's blight imbued,
Marks woman's faith despoiled and lying dead.

And no dread picture on the ancient page
So moves my being, — ah! not even he,
The great Achilles, awful in his rage,
Nursing his wrath beside the wailing sea;

Nor fair Andromache, who through her tears
Holds up her boy again and yet again
For that farewell which, ringing through the years,
Makes women weep and men once more be men;

Nor, where the fount of swift Scamander runs,
The glorious Hector falters for relief;

Not aged Priam, spoiled of many sons;
Not Hecuba, still royal in her grief;

But, uneclipsed by all the mighty shades,
Your faces haunt me, threatened by the Fates,
Æthra and Clymene, — O silent maids,
Who stand with Helen at the Scæan gates!

SHOES OF ALABASTER.

From Agra, city of delight,
  These tiny shoes have come to me,
Of alabaster carven white,
  With clasp and chasery.

They found them at the temple door
  Where opal clouds swing low and swirl,
Like kindred shapes, to hover o'er
  Thy domes, O Mosque of Pearl!

Who left them at that glorious gate?
  For plaint or prayer of what fair maid
Were these frail wonders doomed to wait
  Outside the sacred shade?

I see her linger in the glow,
  Where sunlit tulips sway and meet;
The milk-white marbles warmer grow
  To lure her dainty feet.

I see her pass within the shrine
  Whose walls are like to Paradise ;
Their jeweled scrolls, with text divine,
  Are envious of her eyes.

Her gentle footfall leaves no sound
  Within the calm and holy fane ;
Her lovers, prostrate on the ground,
  Shall wait for her in vain.

For never mortal maid was she,
  But some white wraith of fancy's muse,
Some dream-child born of ecstasy,
  Who wore these flawless shoes.

With pointed tips set toward the East,
  Here in the sunlight they shall rest,
Until, from her long fast, or feast,
  Shall come their spirit-guest.

White ghosts of shoes ! speed if ye must
  When she shall call ; but leave, I pray,
Two flakes of alabaster dust,
  To show she passed this way.

THE FIRST GREEK PORTRAIT.

So very long ago it was, men have forgot the year,
And yet the time of myrtle-bloom to lovers then was dear;
The waves were then as blue as now that washed the Sicyon shore,
The olive's shade, as gray and green, above the open door,
Where stood the ancient potter's wheel, with vase and urn of clay,
Simply, and yet so chastely wrought, men have forgot the way.
The daffodils and hyacinths beneath the gray wall grew,
O'er which the wild Corinthian grape its tangled blossom threw;
And there the handsome, glad young Greek the potter's daughter wooed,
In days when maids were dear as now, and men as brave and good.
He said, "Farewell — ah, sweet — farewell!" and yet he did not go;

Old is the fashion, very old, but still its ways
we know;
And longingly and lovingly his shadow on the
wall
Swayed in the sunlight, went and came, as
shadows flit and fall,
Till suddenly — a profile clear upon the dark-
ened space —
The young Greek girl, with hand inspired,
had drawn her lover's face.

The potter marveled when he found the shadow
pictured there:
"'T is from the gods, a gift," he said, "to
shape our soul's despair!"
And reverently he filled the lines, which limned
the portrait old,
With yellow clay from Corinth's strand and
sacred kept the mould;
While all the Sicyon potters came to learn, by
look or sign,
How haply to Butades' child befell this touch
divine.
And through the world the wonder went; but
idle now her fame: —
It was so very long ago, men have forgot her
name!

Ah! great Apelles! what didst thou — thou
son of Sicyon's heart!
Proud heir of all to Greece bequeathed by this
one maiden's art —
That thou hast not remembered her, when
glorious in the land?
What face so dear as hers had been from thy
immortal hand?
And Myron grand! and Phidias! had ye no
debt to own?
No memory to cast in bronze, no grace to
carve in stone,
To mind us of this fair Greek maid, of all her
race the first
To teach: Love is the fount of art for which
the nations thirst?
Your gods are many! Great they stand! We
bow before their shrine;
And yet we would there might have been, in
all the glorious line,
One simply carven monument, whereon we still
might trace:
To her who erst on Sicyon's wall outlined her
lover's face!

A GHOST.

This is Pavia! Grand old town
Of priestly lore and state renown.
This is Pavia! let us stay
Our weary feet one night and day.
The city of an hundred towers,
Its great heart still will shelter ours;
Its walls are shadowy, cool, and gray;
Here let us rest one night and day.

Beneath these arches, grim and quaint,
Still lies the dust of Sage and Saint,
Whose ashes for a thousand years
Have shrined the pilgrim's fitful tears.
Men idly come and idly go —
What is it that affrights me so?
Some awful presence in the air,
Ghost-like and chill, seems everywhere.
Pavia? Naught is in the word!
What have I read? what have I heard?
Who beckons when I fain would wait
At Belcredi, or Maino's gate?

Who follows when my footsteps stray
Within thy courts, San Michelé?
Who glides before through hall and fane
Founded of old by Charlemagne?
By Charlemagne? Ah, now I know,
Stand back I pray, and let me go!
Where his great deeds in splendor shine,
Still lurk the sin and shame of thine.
Thy dread name, I recall at last,
Thou saddest ghost of all the past!

Ay! thou wert Queen! the last to hold
That title proud in Wessex old!
Thou wert Eadburgha — yes, I see
The empty cup thou handest me.
Too late, alas, my scanty dole
To ease the hunger of a soul!
Thou gav'st thy husband's friend to sup,
And mixed for him the poisoned cup.
The brave king quaffed at foaming brim;
Young Warr, his liege, drank after him,
And both fell dead! Oh, tale of woe!
Begun long centuries ago!

And o'er the seas to Charlemagne
Thou fled'st for comfort, but in vain.

He gently bade the sweet nuns call
Thee, Lady of the Convent Hall;
But thy seared soul found naught of good
Amidst the saintly sisterhood;
So driven on, and up and down,
From cloister-gate to tower and town,
Thou cam'st, at last, with bleeding feet,
To tread Pavia's ancient street;
Here doomed to beg forevermore
Thy bitter bread from door to door.

Here thou didst die with hunger's wail;
I would I could forget the tale!
I would to-night I did not know
Thy wan shape flitting to and fro;
Thy cup once drained, no hand could fill;
That cup accurst is empty still!
Too late, alas, my scanty dole
To ease the hunger of a soul!
May God's grace rest thee at the last,
Thou saddest ghost of all the past!

Pavia! Ah, I would not stay
Within thy walls one night or day!

THE MOUNTAIN OF THE HOLY CROSS.

The Lord himself hath set the sign!—
"Dear Christ forgive!" God's servant prayed;
And every head along the line
Of bronzed, rough-bearded men was bare,
In sudden silence, as the prayer
Arose within the mission-glade.

Before, behind, the mountains stood;
In grim, defiant strength arrayed,
They seemed an awful brotherhood,
Through some gigantic passion knit;
Too great for earth; for heaven unfit;
"Dear Christ forgive!" God's servant prayed.

And lo! beyond the wild ravine,
Where ghostly pines their gray arms toss,
A hoary mountain head was seen,
Whose fissured crest forever shows,
Emblazoned in eternal snows,
The sacred emblem of the Cross.

And men who called the world accurst,
And men who ne'er had heard a prayer,
Men who had dared and done their worst,
Rode awestruck through the lonely way,
Forgetting what they fain would say,
With Christ's own sign before them there.

Then slowly up the mountain track,
Wind-swept, the rude procession swayed ;
Nor, though long summers waned, came back.
Died they beneath the holy sign
Of earth-love crowned by the divine ?
"We hope through Christ!" God's servant
prayed.

The Lord himself the Cross hath set !
Was the Omniscient One afraid
Lest his far-straying sons forget ?
Lest they, who midst the mountains hide,
Remember not the Crucified ?
"Dear Christ, forbid!" God's servant prayed.

SLUMBER SONG.

Calm, unimpassioned, in thy wide dominions,
Wilt thou relentless stay, and staying keep
The restful shadows of thy purple pinions
Aloof from mortals, O sweet goddess, Sleep?

We know the twilight brought thy soft caresses,
But toil forbade us, and we might not rest;
We saw white poppies braided in thy tresses,
We breathed their fragrance, leaning on thy breast;

Yet dared not stay lest, drowsy at its coming,
We mock the midnight — and the watch was set;
We longed to clasp thee, but some chill, benumbing
Presence withheld us, and withholds us yet.

Art thou so grieved that like some slighted maiden,
Thou 'lt not return though we repentant weep,

And pray for balms, in Lotos islands laden
With slumberous airs, O gentle goddess, Sleep?

Or, vigil-worn, do thy obscure relations
To man's dull senses faintly die away?
And have we left no mystic incantations
To lure thee back, no charm to bid thee stay?

Ah! I recall one old song's drowsy measure,
A rhythmic murmur to a baby fair;—
Once more, sweet goddess, bend at mortal pleasure!
Shake out the blossoms from thy lustrous hair!

"We float, we float!" a mother sang and singing,
Rocked to and fro and swayed her baby love;
"White spray swings upward to the blue waves clinging;
White clouds drift downward from the blue above.

"The great waves rise with steady undulations;
The great waves fall; we lie upon their breast;

We hold our hearts to check their wild pulsations,
We clasp our hands — but rest, my baby, rest!

"Thou hast no care! Thou need'st not wake or worry
Should moons go eastward or should moons go west;
What couldst thou do though stars should wait or hurry,
In their long courses? Rest, my baby, rest!

"It is not time, until some far to-morrow,
For thee to strive with Why and Whence and How;
Leave the great world to hug its load of sorrow
In bitterness! Sleep, baby love, sleep now!

"We float, we float!" she sang; and, with her, singing,
My soul keeps tune, repeating still the cry,
"What couldst thou do though stars astray were swinging?"
Ah, little one! and what indeed could I?

I lay me down and leave till God's to-morrow
Earth's vexing problems with their stern bequest,
Since rest is duty! and I fain would borrow
The mother-music for my spirit's guest.

And lo! she comes! As in the old time plighted,
Once more we float, through Dreamland shadows deep;
We did not know, until our souls were righted,
How vain our watching, nor how blest our sleep.

WINDS OF THE NORTH.

The cold winds out of the Northland blow,
Filling the frosty air with snow,
Sweeping the white flakes to and fro,
O'er the moorlands dreary;
My lord, he wills that the flames burn higher,
My lady, around the glowing fire,
Draweth her crimson cushions nigher,
Calling it cheery.

I am out in the gardens old,
Out in the bitter, stinging cold,
Smiling to see the gathering mould
On the brown leaves lying;
Drinking with joy the breath of the breeze
That sweeps through the boughs of the leafless trees,
The breath of the wind from the Northern Seas
To the dead flowers sighing.

Let them bar their door to the Northwind bold,
Round them closer their garments fold,

Shudder as when a tale is told
Of the dead and dying;
The doors of my heart I open throw,
Through its empty portals come and go,
O wild Northwinds, for I love ye so,
With a love defying!

Were ye not born in that land of mine,
Rocked in the arms of the Northern pine,
Kissed by the leaves of the Upland vine
Which icily glisten?
Have I not come in the gloom to-night,
Out in the gloom which yet is bright,
With the fitful gleams of the Northern light,
To lovingly listen?

Blow, glorious winds! for ye bring to me
A chant of the Northland strong and free,
With sweep of the skies, and surge of the sea,
Through its measure flowing;
And clear in its rhythmical undertone,
I catch the airs to my childhood known,
The glad, wild songs that were mine alone,
With the Northwinds blowing.

A MIRACLE

O RADIANT Life, when we set sail together,
From out the mist-land, with your hand in mine
You vowed me all things ; days of sunlit weather,
And nights of calm and skies of golden shine.

You said that I should drift by happy reaches
Of shores low lying where the sea-bird flies ;
That I should watch, beyond white-sanded beaches,
The glorious stars above the mountains rise.

That some day I should see the mystic token
Which marked the harbor where my Love had been ;
Should see, and know my little boat was spoken,
And with glad sails go flying swiftly in.

You promised, Life, that I should find the treasure
Of which immortals long have dreamed and sung ;

The gift supreme — love's bliss in boundless measure!
And I believed, for life and love were young.

Sit closer now, and clasp my hand more tightly!
Nor hope, nor promise fails though years have fled,
But ah! I see I took your vows too lightly,
Too idly, Life! I knew not what you said.

Safely you guided to the blessed haven
My fragile craft; yet many a one went down
Whose hopes as eager were, nor wrong nor craven;
But swift storms whitened, and the rocks stood brown.

I know the ways where other voyagers drifting
Beheld with joy the hilltops all a-gem;—
Wrecked in the shadow of the heights uplifting,
Tell me, O Life, what was 't thou promised them?

Love's all! as unto me in that bright dawning! —
I tremble now to hold such rapture true!
It is a miracle! Yet I, at morning,
Saw not the marvel, nor the wonder knew.

HADST THOU BUT TURNED.

Sir Lancelot, turn back, turn back,
I pray thee, from the lonely downs!
Why leavest thou the beaten track
That leads to city, tower and towns?
This way are footpaths rough and bare,
With edge of moss or scanty fern;
Beyond are meadows lush and fair:—
Sir Lancelot, I pray thee turn!

Thou ridest with thy moody brain;
Thou ridest with thy sullen heart;
Broad roads there are whose ways are plain;
Why seek the field that lies apart?
Footpaths oft mean hearth-fires I trow,
And meat and drink — and after that?
Oh, after that — couldst thou but know,
Thou wouldst not ride to Astolat.

Nor mist, nor hill can longer hide
The castle-walls and turrets gray;

Fair Astolat, thy gates were wide,
  Thy welcome boundless that fair day;
And she, the "lily-maid," the child,
  Served graciously the guest — alack!
She had not raised her eyes and smiled,
  O Lancelot, hadst thou turned back!

She had not asked, she had not heard
  The witching tale of spur and plume:
She had not dared the sudden word
  That set the girlish cheeks abloom,
When, craving sweet consent of thine,
  She bounded up the castle stair,
And brought the red embroidered sign,
  O Lancelot, for thee to wear!

She had not watched thee ride away,
  Nor guarded, in that eastern tower,
Thy massive shield by night and day,
  Tracing each blazoned leaf and flower,
With throbbing heart and close-barred door,
  While she entranced and joyous sat,
Thy simplest word repeating o'er,
  Hadst thou not come to Astolat.

There had not dawned that bitter morn
  When woke the heart of sweet Elaine;

And when, to crush the love new-born,
Again the knight rode down the plain,
No scarlet sleeve flares on his helm,
No farewell words he fondly saith;
The bravest peer of Arthur's realm
Nor heeds, nor hears, the wail of death.

Ah, Lancelot! hadst thou not come
To Astolat that woeful day,
The stainless dead, "steered by the dumb,"
Had not in silence sailed away.
We had not watched the black-draped barge
Float slowly toward the palace gate;
Nor seen, in stately halls and large,
The lily-maiden audience wait.

We had not heard the rueful plea,
(This, Lancelot, thou too shalt hear!)
"O peerless knight, pray thou for me!
Pray thou for me, Queen Guinevere,
And give me burial, for the sake
Of maiden love, unsought, unwed;—
Fear not, sweet Queen, I shall not wake!
Farewell, Sir Knight, for I am dead!"

Nor had we wept, when all the train
Moved up the aisle with solemn march,

To lay the golden-haired Elaine
Beneath the grand cathedral arch ;
And yet, throughout the ages long,
Our human hearts in vain had yearned
For England's saddest, sweetest song,
O Lancelot, hadst thou but turned !

THE CASTLE OF SONG.

Upon the mountain height it stands,
In far-off, yet familiar lands.

Its outer walls are gray and cold,
Its sculptured gates are green with mould.

No warden from the watch-tower calls;
No bugle note of welcome falls.

Through garden paths, dark ivies twine,
With furze and heath and eglantine.

The hawthorn's branches bare and dry
Are sharply etched against the sky.

The dreary poplar casts a spell,
A dead and ghostly sentinel.

Within the empty banquet hall
Elusive footsteps flit and fall.

Who comes may wander at his will,
But finds each chamber cold and still,

Each corridor unswept and lone, —
Until the master claims his own.

Then he who holds the castle's key,
Wakes light and love and ecstasy!

In every hall the hearth-fires glow;
Fair youths and brave pass to and fro;

While stately ladies sit within,
Amidst their waiting-maids, and spin.

The happy bells, beneath the tower,
From dawn to dawn repeat the hour.

The May-time sends its messenger,
And violet banks are all astir.

The ivy for the rose makes room;
The hawthorn's boughs are white with bloom;

And lo! Still wet with morning dew,
The Wonder-Flower of heavenly blue!

The glorious hours of day are spent
In knightly deed or tournament.

The lofty Bayards all are here,
Without reproach, without a fear.

At nightfall, to the chapel close,
The courtly train in reverence goes,

And fair nuns glide like shadows tall,
With pale moon-faces, through the hall; —

Cecilia, wrapt in holy calm;
Fair Hildegarde, with crown and palm;

And she the world remembereth,
The sweet girl saint, Elizabeth.

But when the vesper prayers are said,
The feast of song hath place instead.

With knight and prince on either hand,
The minstrel and the harper stand, —

The heroes of the Minnelay,
Reinmar the Old, Wolfram the Gray,

And he whom best we love to name,
Walther of fair Birdmeadow fame.

Who holds the castle's mystic key,
Lord of romance and song is he!

His vassals, every wave and breeze,
With treasure from beyond the seas!

And from his own watch tower afar,
His soul goes forth from star to star.

The heavens hang low — a scroll unsealed;
The upper glories stand revealed.

Who holds the castle's mystic key,
The least of servitors is he!

He flings the portals open wide,
That all may enter and abide.

His bosom thrills with holy cheer;
Will not the world be glad to hear?

The great, wise world? It has no time
For wonder-tale or idle rhyme!

The great wise world? It has no need
Heart-song, or star-song, e'er to heed!

Or if it chance a strain to hear,
It lists with unreceptive ear,

As if the castle did but seem, —
A fantasie, or foolish dream!

So floats the legend lightly on;
A moment's gleam, and then 't is gone,

Like thistle-down upon the gale! —
But simple folk believe the tale

Of wondrous, song-enchanted heights;
And some have seen the castle-lights.

AT VESPERS.

THE vesper bells!
And sweet-faced nuns at even
Go in and out; while clear the music swells,
Earth-born but tuned for heaven,
O vesper bells!

With folded hands,
The convent maidens meetly
Follow the train; blessing the sacred bands
Which bind them, firmly, sweetly,
With folded hands.

And over them
Our Lady's eye beholding;
Not e'en the winds dare kiss her mantle's hem,
Or flutter in its folding:
O sacred hem!

Up the dim aisles,
Beyond the studded portals,
Kneeling before the shrine where Mary smiles,

They pass, O happy mortals!
Up the dim aisles.

The golden sun,
Through painted windows stealing,
Throws shadows on the cheek of one; for one
The bloom of rose revealing.
O wayward sun!

God only sees
How silent hearts are broken;
The deepening flush, the Prince, on bended knees,
May trace — love's mystic token —
On bended knees.

Let grandest march
From organ old and solemn
Ring through the gloom of each receding arch,
Around each fluted column!
The Wedding March!

Earth has a bride
To-day. Through misty veiling
Gleam love-lit eyes; jewels and flowers hide

Within her silken trailing,
Fair earth-born bride!

But no less fair
Is she who on the morrow,
Kneels upon holy ground, in meekness there
Asking surcease of sorrow;
Ah, no less fair!

And this is all!
On strength divine relying,
The veiled head bows; and sable curtains fall
O'er human self-denying;
And this is all!

With mortal eyes,
We see. Leave it for Him
To judge — in whom omniscient power lies —
Whether the blight of earth shall dim
The sacrifice.

UNTER DEN LINDEN.

JUNE 16, 1871.

I.

"VICTORY!" This was the first that she read:
And then, "Heart's dearest," the soldier had said,
Tracing the lines in a faltering way,
"Heart's dearest, the hospital surgeons say
That I shall be out of their hands to-day.
'T was an ugly wound, but the danger is past;
I am coming to you, at last — at last!
Unter den Linden! Yes, we shall be there!
Come with a rose in your dark shining hair —
Not the white blossoms you once used to wear.
White roses are meet for those who are slain;
The rich wine-red, for the welcome, remain;
Red as our life-blood, and sweet as the air
That floated from Eden, sweet and as rare;
Greet me with a wine-red rose in your hair!
Germania triumphs! Come with a song;
And can you, dear heart, be patient and strong?

For slow is the crutch and ghastly the sling,
And gone is the hand that once wore the ring —
Your ring, the one pledge I promised to bring!
I yield them ungrudged, with life, should need be,
But hold fast my troth to country and thee."

II.

In through the Brandenburg gateway they come,
With clashing of arms and clangor of drum!
Unter den Linden! How proudly thy shade
Quivers and thrills with the wild cannonade,
As wild as the battle's carnival made!
Borne on its passion we catch up the song;
Thrilling and swelling, it thunders along;
Hear it, ye nations afar o'er the sea!
"Germania triumphs! Germania free —
Free and united through glad victory!"
Heroes of Saarbrück and Metz and Sedan
Tell how the torrent of victory ran!
Fair hands of women shall bring from afar
Hundreds of flowers for each bloody scar —
Scars that far dearer than rare jewels are.

"The Emperor comes!" for his guardsmen
make way! —
"A woman, struck faint, has fallen," ye say?
And the troops, in their jubilant grand review,
March on through the linden-grown avenue;
But she in her death-swoon still lieth there,
A woman stone white, yet passingly fair,
With the bloom of a wine-red rose in her hair.
Ah! what did ye hear the guardsman had
said?
"Only a man, in the hospital, dead!"

LAVINIA.

A Painting by Titian in the Royal Museum at Berlin.

I come once more to gaze on thee,
Lavinia!
O'er miles and miles of weary sea,
Thy tender eyes have followed me;
I come once more to gaze on thee.
The long days crowd into the years,
And years die out with length of days,
While mocked alike are hopes and fears,
In life's perplexing, tangled ways,
Where men rush madly for the prize,
Which, lost or won, ne'er satisfies;
Yet never once, though stars may shine
Or shadows drift through skies of mine,
Can I forget the matchless grace
That lighteth up thy form and face;
The charm that baffles time and tide,
And holds me captive at thy side.

I am not skilled in artist-lore,
Lavinia!
Of critic's phrase I bring no store,
The words fall soulless o'er and o'er;
I am not skilled in artist-lore.
I only know the master's hand
Brings not such life from fancies dim;
I know you stood as now you stand,
And gave the picture unto him.
I know the glory painted there
Hath glimmered in thy golden hair;
I know the warm and tender brown
Hath nestled in thine amber gown.
I stand enraptured at thy feet;
Hast thou no word of greeting sweet?
Thy lips have called though they be dumb;
Lavinia, have I not come?

I come to gaze into thine eyes,
Lavinia!
I capture there the sweet surprise
That in their dusky shadow lies;
I gaze and gaze into thine eyes.
'T were false to call thy face divine,
Life's perfectness is pictured there;
The saints with heavenly beauty shine,

Thou of the earth art earthly fair.
Madonna like, a distant star
Might beckon me to realms afar ;
But thou, thou wouldst have walked with me,
Have led my steps right loyally
Through fragrant field or sterile dearth,
Hadst thou not come so soon to earth ;
Had I, untrammeled with my fate,
Not called to thee, alas, so late !

Wilt thou not wait in heaven for me,
Lavinia ?
A thousand years may only be
A single day, sweet friend, to thee ;
Wilt thou not wait in heaven for me ?
Long leagues of ocean seem to lie
Between me and the harbor-bar ;
Perchance thou canst not hear my cry
Across the billows, faint and far ;
Yet sometimes when the sea-foam falls
I catch a glimpse of heavenly walls,
Where rays of sunlit topaz mix
With deeper veins of sardonyx.
Thus might thy soul resplendent shine
Beside the colder glow of mine !
Lavinia, wilt thou not wait
For me, within the golden gate !

BALLAD OF THE BLITHE QUARTETTE

[Locker, Dobson, Gosse, and Lang.]

This is the poet's twilight shade,
When songs inspired no longer ring;
Forgot is Pan in glen and glade,
And mute, Apollo's glorious string.
The muse divine hath taken wing
To unfrequented heights — and yet,
While critics keen are caviling,
We hear them play — the blithe quartette!

With harps from morning-lands estrayed,
And tunes as joyous as the spring,
A minstrel lover's serenade,
The rondel of some jovial king,
A melody whose swirl and swing
Our pulses all a-dancing set,
A jester's catch without its sting,
We hear them play — the blithe quartette!

Staccato measures deftly made
Afar their brilliancy to fling —

Perfection of the art essayed,
Each note a flawless, crystal thing;
Gay chords with laughter echoing,
And some that leave our eyelids wet;
Life's heartsome lays, to which we cling,
We hear them play — the blithe quartette!

ENVOY.

Kind sirs, let us this solace bring
To ease our souls of vain regret:
Though noontide poets cease to sing,
We hear them play — the blithe quartette!

MY LADY OF MAKE-BELIEVE.

My lady hath realms of wide domain;
Castles and palaces proud and fair;
A dungeon-cell, with a clanking chain,
A lonely turret, with winding stair.
Here kings and courtiers in homage stand,
Here prisoners sigh and wait reprieve;
And she rules with a regal sway the land,
This marvelous land of Make-Believe.

My lady hath rank of all degrees,
From proud Queen Bess to the Beggar-Maid;
To-day, a princess from over the seas,
To-morrow, a gypsy tattered and frayed.
She hath countless titles that come at call,
Or unto her courtly station cleave;
And one that suiteth her best of all;—
My winsome Lady of Make-Believe!

My lady hath garments of stiff brocade,
Roses of silver bespangle them o'er;

Her fan for the Queen of the East was made,
Her train — it traineth a yard or more.
She hath silks and ribbons in rich array;
The looms of Lyons her velvets weave;
And she weareth them every single day —
This vain little Lady of Make-Believe!

She hath Medici collars and Honiton lace;
She doeth her hair à la Pompadour;
Or hideth her "bangs" and her gleesome face
Under the bonnets her grandame wore.
She hath bracelets, and charms, and chains, and rings;
For jewels like hers a king might grieve;
To pauper and prince her wealth she flings —
My gracious Lady of Make-Believe!

She hath waiting-women who stand and wait,
Or hasten to do her bidding sweet;
She hath slaves who kneel at the palace gate,
And fear the stamp of her tiny feet;
And many a knight who for one sweet glance,
Would wear her favor upon his sleeve,
And shiver for her the stoutest lance —
My haughty Lady of Make-Believe.

"Illusions are vain," doth the preacher say?
"Empty and idle is all that seems"?
"The pageant passeth"? Ah, well! for a day
No shadow hath dimmed her blithesome dreams;
And gentle and pure are her guileless arts,
Though her name should ever the world deceive;
For truest of true, in her heart of hearts,
Is my winsome Lady of Make-Believe.

WILD VIOLETS.

When clouds from April skies have rolled,
Though earth be chill and winds be cold,
And woodland ways still lone and wet,
I seek the first wild violet
That blooms above the fragrant mould.

Thy mien is proud, thy pulse controlled;
Thou wear'st the regal roses sold
In city marts; and yet — and yet —
Thou wert thyself a violet
In those enchanted days of old.

So send I — am I over bold? —
This gift to grace thy bosom's fold;
Believing if thy hand doth set,
Against thy heart, a violet,
An old-time love may yet be told.

JUNE.

THE month of roses, forever fair,
Radiant, miracle-working June!
Laden with color and perfume rare,
Set with the song of birds atune!

The blue of the West is in her eyes,
The kiss of the East on her dewy mouth,
While damask and white on her bosom lies
The bloom that breathes of the burning South.

With joy of living, her voice beguiles;
Love, at her touch, all nature sways;
Her gladsome, glorious beauty smiles,
And lo! the coming of perfect days!

JULY.

She comes elate her own to seek,
The peerless queen of summer days,
The warm winds kiss her ruddy cheek,
The earth with fruitage lies ablaze.

Through paths of endless bloom she walks;
With tilted lance the grasses stir;
The cornflowers bend on slender stalks
In sweet obeisance unto her;

While troops of daisies, born afield,
Their dainty petaled rims unfold;
And like a royal legion yield
For her their glowing hearts of gold.

AUGUST.

White noons are languorous with the light;
  Parched lands lie sterile in the dearth,
Day unto day and night to night
  Pulsating with the throes of earth.

Only in some remote retreat,
  Hidden afar from haunts of men,
Faint signs of life our senses greet, —
  A whir of wings from cooling fen;

Or, where the sheltering shadows fall,
  The water-lily bares its breast;
And slumberous perfumes rise and call
  A world resistless back to rest.

A ROSE IN AUTUMN.

O BOUNTEOUS Summer, we take thy bloom,
Thy wealth of roses, and fling them by, —
Petals of flame with their depths agloom,
And, "Largess, largess!" ever cry.

But some late morn when the gray mists rim
The meadows beyond the garden close,
We kiss the ghost of the frost-flower dim,
And pledge our hearts for one perfect rose.

TRANSMIGRATION.

Outstretched and stark within his icy shroud,
The Old Year said:
"The hour has come! Thrust back the surging crowd,
I too am dead!

"Ended alike the joy, the sin, the woe;
All struggles cease;
Into the Past let me unhindered go,
And rest in peace."

The Old Year's soul with Time stood face to face,
Encircled fast;
"The Past," saith Time, "hath no abiding place!
There is no Past!

"There is no New Year! This, a myth to fill
The minds of men!

Thy doom is transmigration! Thou must still
Be born again,

"Again and yet again, in some new guise,
Till changed within,
The Old Year from its sepulchre shall rise
Unstained by sin.

"Then in its primal purity at rest
All time shall be
In that Nirvana of the ages blest,
Eternity."

The solemn bells of midnight cease to toll;
White-robed and pale,
The Old Year riseth as a new-born soul;
And men cry: "Hail!"

A MOUNTAIN HERITAGE.

I own and possess it,
This mountain of mine!
Exultant, I bless it,
In shadow and shine!
For the Titans that bore it,
And flung it on high;
For the stars that gleam o'er it,
Serene in the sky!
For its shadowy, solemn,
Gray forests of pine;
For each moss-rifted column,
In storm-shattered line;
For the sweep of its valleys,
Its dim, haunted glen,
Where the elfin-king rallies
His green-hooded men;
For the ripple and laughter
Of brooklet and breeze;
For the thrill that comes after,
Aloft through the trees;

For the rocks split asunder
By frost and by sun,
For the streams that glide under,
Green, amber, and dun,
And crown with their fountains,
Life-giving, divine,
This mountain of mountains,
Majestic — and mine!

My fathers bequeathed it
From sire unto son;
They living received it,
And passed one by one
To glad heights eternal;
But hoary with age,
In sunlight supernal,
Their last heritage,
The mountain remaineth
In grandeur alone;
Its glory ne'er waneth,
Its wealth is its own.

The gay world, emboldened,
Prays, "Yield of your heights,
Your sunsets engoldened,
Your summer-land lights!

Let us make us proud portals
  Of cedar and pine!"—
Stay! These be Immortals!
  These giants of mine!
And the great builder crieth:
  "Give, give of your trees,
For the stout ship that flieth
  The sail on the seas!
Let us bend their heads hoary
  For keel and for mast!"—
These kings in their glory?
  These priests of the past?
Ah! the gods in their passion
  May strike at their heart,
But man shall not fashion
  Their shape to his art!

I own and possess it,
  This heritage blest!
With the winds that caress it,
  The light on its crest;
With the far blue above it,
  In infinite line;
I own and I love it,
  This mountain of mine!
But comes a heart weary
  Of worldly bequest,

All wistful and teary,
And longing for rest,
For the balm and the healing,
In fragrance that fall,
For the welcome revealing
The great Soul of All;
For nature's still places,
For solitude's bar,
For God's boundless spaces,
Above and afar;
For the sunset's last ember
O'er forests of pine, —
Dear heart, then remember,
The mountain is thine!

GOLDENROD.

O GOLDENROD — wild, lavish goldenrod!
Thou glad perfection of the summer days!
Lift up your tasseled heads
And nod to me, as in the old-time ways!
Shake out the gold-dust from your tufted threads,
And dip and nod!

Yes, I remember how the warm skies hung
Above the meadows that were all astir, —
Luxuriant with your bloom!
How waxen-sweet the crested blossoms were,
Like flaming censers, fed with rare perfume,
And softly swung!

And there beyond the stretch of rugged sod,
Which bares its tawny breast unto the sea,
The thick brown alders grow,
And hide the wall on which was placed for me,
All wet with dew, so many years ago,
Bright goldenrod!

Love's first shy gift, from sun-browned, boyish
hands!
True hands and brave, in toilsome, work-day
fields
Grown strong; yet still to me
Bearing the bloom the choicest season yields,
As on we fare where noontide shadows be
In pleasant lands.

But I have longed through all the happy years,
O glad, wild flower, upon these slopes aglow,
Once more to see you swing;
I did not think your breath would choke me so!
I never dreamed your dainty airs could bring
These sudden tears!

SONG OF THE JENNIE.

WHERE skies are fair the Jennie rides
The bosom of the sparkling lake;
The breeze sweeps down the mountain-sides,
Kisses the water as it glides,
And ripples in her wake.

We hear the stroke of rhythmic oars,
By dainty hands dipped low and swung,
As skims the boat by sunny shores,
And where the gurgling stream outpours
Its rocks and reeds among.

Or where thy mirrored crest beguiles,
O granite-browed Megunticook,
She breaks the green pool into smiles,
And nestles midst the faery isles
That to thy fastness look.

And when, at dusk, one white star shines,
Above the blue lake's mystic rim,

The Jennie sweeps across the lines
That fringe the shadowy shore of pines,
  Into the twilight dim.

And glad ears catch the liquid notes
  Borne lightly on the joyous air ;
O bonniest of bonny boats,
With thee she sings, with thee she floats,
  The maid with shining hair !

Keep loving watch, O glorious star,
  Above the mountain's purple crown,
Till swings the boat within the bar,
And kindly from thine heights afar,
  O great Megunticook, look down !

ENSHRINED.

Adown the avenue of stately trees,
I sit and gaze and gaze!
There is no love-song in the autumn breeze,
No dream-light in the haze.
The golden glory of the dying leaves
Lies trodden in the dust;
The scarlet creeper droppeth from the eaves
At every fitful gust;
The dark, wild ivy in its doom receives
The mildew and the rust.

Oh, glad, exultant Spring! and only this
For many a promise given!
Oh, blighting sense of utter dreariness
After the breath of heaven!
The cloud-like phantom of a waning moon
Follows the setting sun;
The distant owlet croaks his dismal tune
In caverns dank and dun.
Oh, ghost of idle days — to come so soon,
As though the race were won!

I have no new-made grave on which to fling
My soul, in vain regrets,
Or wait until the luring airs of spring
Bring back the violets;
I only ask for this lost year of mine
A sacred, fresh, new tomb;
I have no fear that ever touch of time
Its treasure will consume;
I bring sweet spices here, and oil and wine,
And many a rich perfume.

Beneath the pyramids the kings lie down,
And in their fastness sleep;
Beneath the floods the royal lilies drown,
And none are left to weep.
Embalmed in state, alone and silently,
Shall lie my crownèd dead,
My regal year, whose grandeur none shall see,
For whom no tear is shed;—
How long his promised length of days shall be,
The Lord hath never said.

SPOKEN AT SEA.

All men go down to the sea in ships:
With a trembling hand and faltering lips,
We spread our sails on the deep unknown,
Each for himself and each alone.
The strong tide floweth unceasingly;
God only knoweth our destiny.

And ships may meet, as yours and mine;
With a tender gleam, the deck-lights shine;
There are wind-swept words of kindly cheer,
A song, a smile, perchance a tear;
Then on, for the ever-hurrying sea
Sings of the shadowy yet-to-be!

And the light dies out of each shining track;
The course was chosen; we turn not back;
No hands are clasped o'er the soundless blue,
But hearts though severed may yet be true;
And a sweeter story ne'er shall be
Than of memory's ship-lights spoken at sea.

THE BATTLE-SONG.

A Ballad of Brittany.

1758.

With eyes afire and hearts aflame, the valiant peasant host,
From Tréguier and good Saint Pol, marched up the Breton coast.
"Sing us our father's battle-song," the standard-bearer said,
"And let the cursed invader know, 'King Arthur is not dead!'
The song that every mother's tongue and every maiden fair,
A thousand years and more have sung from Orne to Finistèrre!
The song by which the Cymric chiefs their ancient battles won,
That we, as they, the foe may slay before the turn of sun!
'A foeman's heart for every eye! a head for every arm!'

The valleys and the mountain-tops know well
the wild alarm!
'Three lives for one!' by grassy mound and
by the cromlech's mould,
And 'blood for tears,' shall dew the ground as
in the days of old!
Sing, comrades mine! the sea-lights shine
where flies the banner red!
As long ago, we greet the foe: 'King Arthur
is not dead!'"

With eyes afire and hearts aflame, from o'er
the English Sea,
A band of brave Welsh mountaineers marched
down through Brittany.
"We strike for England," was the cry, "before
the turn of noon,
But live or die, fling out on high the ancient
battle-tune!
The song that for a thousand years has floated
on the gale,
From Snowdon heights and Harlech lights to
far Glamoran's Vale;
The song our Celtic sires loved, in days that
long have fled,
That mothers to their first born sung: 'King
Arthur is not dead!'"

And like a royal chant of old, rang out the martial strain;
But hark! — a pause — and from afar comes back the grand refrain!
And where the borders of Saint Cast their broken ridges trace,
The invader and the Breton-born stood grimly face to face.
"King Arthur is not dead!" the one in rhythmic cadence cries;
"King Arthur is not dead — not dead!" the Breton host replies.

"Halt! fire!" the English captain shouts. Nor hand nor musket stirred;
And "Fire!" rings down the Breton lines; yet no man heeds the word;
For all who march to Arthur's call are of one kith and kin;
No feud have they, no foe to slay, no strife to lose or win!
But heart to heart, and hand to hand, the weeping soldiers stood,
Whose one ancestral song had proved their common brotherhood.
Ay! tears for blood! Thus shall it be from Orne to Finistèrre,

With love for hate, from Snowdon's hills unto
Glamoran fair,
And peace for strife, throughout the world, and
right in place of wrong,
When men shall learn their brotherhood
through one Immortal Song.

PROPHET AND POET.

I.

THE PROPHET.

SCENE IN THE COURT OF THE ROYAL PALACE AT GRANADA, A. D. 1194.

PROPHETIC silence broods o'er Andaluz:
The stately palms lift up their crownèd heads
And listen, listen; while the vines, deep set
In golden mellowness, cling close and mute
Unto the warm green bosom of the hills
In hushed expectancy. Beyond the far
Sierras, moon and stars swing low and fade,
Not in a liquid opal-tinted dawn
Whose blue and crimson meet and blend and pale
And faintly glow again, but in the full,
Triumphant coming of a day that bursts
Upon a waiting world in perfectness,
And spreadeth sunshine royally! Ay, such
A day as only breaks when Moslem kings
Are born!
All through the night each gilded dome

And frosted minaret had flashed, alight
With heaven's transcendent glow; for signs more rare
And potent ne'er had hung o'er princely head
Than marked the advent of the babe vouchsafed
To Nasar's line — the babe Alhamar named!
And when, at dawn, the jagged mountains veiled
Their sharp, stark faces in the roseate hues
Which make the hoary hills forever young,
When shrill-voiced sentinels aroused the world
From slumber unto prayer, then all the grand,
High places, which for aye shall tell that God
Is great, made answer to a new refrain
In solemn ecstasy. From crag to crag,
Each rock set Atalaya flung the shout,
And ere the Darro's silver threaded net
Had caught the noontide glimmer in its mesh,
Granada's farthest vale had learned — "There is
No God but God!" and — "Nasar's king is born!"

Throw open wide the royal gate!
The court astrologers unto the spacious hall descend;

While eager multitudes their coming wait
And like tall, wind-swept rushes sway and bend
In feverish delight.
The priestly hems,
Broidered with Oriental signs, and thickly, quaintly hung
With fringèd gold and many brilliant gems,
Clink down the marble stairs and trail among
Close-crowded tunics, cool and white.
"Who greater is," the prophets cry,
"Than Prince Alhamar, or shall be, while stars portentous roll?"
And slow they swing their mystic wands on high,
And dip their sharpened cusps to mark the scroll
With his nativity.
"A proud career
The stars predict for Nasar's prince," they say. "The years shall send
Him every kingly gift; and bard and seer
Recount his fame till Moslem kingdoms end;
A prince beloved in peace is he:
Invincible in war!"

"El Ghalib!" all the people shout. "El Ghalib! Conqueror!"
"There is no conqueror save God!" In calm
And measured accents, as from one who stands
Serene above the tangled ways of men,
The solemn words upon the startled throng
Descend. The mad, wild clangor ends in strange,
Oppressive silence. Who shall dare gainsay
The truth of Moslem Writ? Yet as the gaunt,
Gray-bearded man, bowed down with age and leagues
Of dusty travel, stands within their midst,
The court magicians glance at him askance;
Then towards the Kebla turn their steadfast eyes
As if for morning prayer. So all the throng,
In mocking mood, makes way and stands agape,
While they who catch the scornful cue exclaim,
"Lo! here a prophet is! See how his staff,
Crooked like an Almucantar's rod, hath turned
Unto the East! Behold his girdle wrought
Of leathern fragments, set with Cufic signs
Long since forgot in Araby; and robes
So ancient in their grimy woof, the great

Mohammed may himself have worn them ere
He slept! A son of wonders truly he!
Shall he not prophesy?"
Ay! prophesy!
Who fitter for the task than he who seven
Times seventy rounds hath made with sandaled feet,
About the Caaba's shrine, and prostrate, kissed
The Holy Stone with each required prayer?
Who, living threescore years and ten, hath drank
From Zem Zem's waters once for every year,
And home returning, hung his open tent
With Mecca's aloe-bloom? To what more true,
More faithful son should Allah grant the gift
Divine of prophecy?
Closer around
The aged seer crowded the mocking throng.
The wrinkled face shone fair. The feeble frame
Majestic grew through inspiration's light.
"O Moslems! Ye do well to learn of great
Alhamar's reign! Stretch out your eager arms
And clasp the vision of exultant power
That cometh at his beck! Let flash your keen
Blue scimitars, and shout as pleaseth men

For triumphs yet to be! But days are near
When Islam's haughty sons shall learn that pride
Has heights before unknown; and victory
Is only his who conquers in defeat.
Beneath a crown all kings are great; but he
Who crownless makes the nation's foe its friend
Alone hath royalty! O children, born
Of princes and by prophets taught, think ye
Of this when unto Islam's hated foe
The great Alhamar kneels!"
Like winds
Among the rustling corn, a murmur rose
And ran. "A Moor to unbelievers yield!
A Moslem monarch sue for grace at whose
Glad birth-hour Jupiter hath smiled? A son
Of Beni Nasar kiss the dust while gleams
The Moorish spear?" And loud and louder grew
The clamor of the faithless multitude,
By sneers and threats of wily craftsmen led,
Till mad with frenzied unbelief, they hurled
The Prophet from the city's outer gate,
And stoned him unto death.
This is the tale
Of Aben Hared. Unto God all men
Belong. To Him may we in peace return!

II.

THE POET.

TIME, TWO HUNDRED YEARS LATER: IN A COURT OF THE ALHAMBRA, A MINSTREL SINGS.

Yusef of Nasar reigneth; and the City of the Fountains
Like a white-robed queen is thronèd in her sun-lit majesty;
And, like white-robed maids-in-waiting, behind her stand the mountains,
With their snowy clustered summits, keeping lookout o'er the sea.
And the massive, red Alhambra, with its alcazar and towers,
Guards the happy, trustful Vega, stretching leagues and leagues away,
Content and trustful ever, though the war-sign lifts or lowers,
With its fiery eyes in night-time, and its smoky haze by day.

Secure within the valley, the cool wind wooes the spirit
Of the sunny tropic regions with a promise soft and sweet;

But the aloes bend their heads, and the listening vine-leaves hear it,
And tell it to the hillsides and the waters at their feet.

Then the noisy, dashing Darro down its rocky chasm dances,
And brings a hundred streamlets on the snowy mountains fed;
While the blushing vineyards reddened with the summer's ardent glances,
Cry, "'T is we who fill the wine-cups! Let the wind and sun be wed!"

Oh! the breath of burning fragrance that across the southern ocean,
Comes to greet the cool forget-me-nots and dewy asphodels!
Oh! silvered grain-fields swung with an innate, rhythmic motion!
Oh! tropic fruits that dip and nod like golden marriage-bells!

Happy art thou, fair Granada, where the North and South have striven
Each with its rarest offering to grace the wedding feast!

Happy hills and happy valleys, where the rugged West has given
Its furrowed cheek and bosom to the kisses of the East!

Blest for aye the favored city with its thousand towers gilded
And lifting each its minaret beneath the ambient skies, —
The skies above Granada, in whose lucid heights are builded
The moon-tipped domes and spires of the Prophet's Paradise!

Thus in the Moorish court the Poet chanted,
When o'er the marble floor each slender column
Had marked its slanting shadow, and the gleams
Of moonlight fell, through fretted lace-work stealing,
And through the silvered traceries, revealing
The rare, quaint fancy of Arabian dreams.

He had come in, unheeded and undaunted,
Himself so like a shadow dark and solemn,

In robes of camel's hair through deserts trailed;
Silent he stood with aspect stern and dreary,
Till of the revel all the throng grown weary,
Had with delight the strange musician hailed.

"Sing of Granada!" prayed the fair — the knighted;
And softly dripped, in founts of alabaster,
Wine-tinted waters, while the minstrel sung;
"Of great Alhamar!" cried the king applauding,
A song of war, his noblest triumph lauding,
In days when Cross with Crescent clashed and swung.

As with a flash, the poet's dark eyes lighted;
And from its place beside the dim pilaster
He proudly caught his sweet-stringed instrument;
No Moslem scimitar unused to sheathing,
No battle-axe of Moorish onslaught breathing,
Could to its chords a wilder strain have lent.

And turbaned knights let fall their half-drained glasses,
And ladies fair behind their gem-lit veiling,

The closer shrank, eager and yet afraid,
As through the dim hall, drifting like a vision,
The swift word-painting moved to airs elysian
Like pictured hangings by enchantment swayed.

They see, as men in dreams, the mountain passes,
And lance and banderole where wild vines trailing
Alone had choked the long unused defiles;
While fair Granada, like a golden-hearted,
O'er-ripe pomegranate from its stem half-parted,
Within the greedy gaze of Castile smiles.

And Christian foe beneath the ramparts sitteth, —
Jaen, the valiant, through the long months making
Its brave defense with many a fight and feint;
But ghastly famine stalks above the moating,
And o'er the walls, thin, bloodless spectres floating,
Bear fateful signs to Ferdinand the Saint.

Then over all a sudden grayness flitteth
From which one form its shapeless figure taking,
Drifts like a phantom o'er the shrouded plain.
'T is proud Alhamar! See! they catch the glimmer,
Beyond Jaen where festive tent-lights shimmer! —
Still through the dim court floats the wild refrain:

Woe to Granada! What now are the towers,
That rise from her ramparts massive and red!
Woe to Granada! What now are her bowers
But sepulchred gardens with bloom for the dead!

O valleys! look upward where city lights glisten!
Is there no help where the white crescents glow?
O ill-fated city! look downward and listen!
Hear ye no tidings of good from below?

Ay! down from Granada a lone horseman goeth!
Can one avail aught where the chosen host fails?

Who gains from the deep sea its secret? —
Who knoweth
The soul of a king till misfortune assails?

On, on, through the night, he is breathlessly
speeding,
On where the swift Xenil silently steals,
Still on, through the camp revel, mute and
unheeding,
Till low at the feet of the Christian he kneels.

"I am Alhamar! Alas, what remaineth
Of greatness, since spent is the struggle, and
vain!
What for the proud heart or false hand that
staineth
Granada's white marbles with blood of the
slain!

"Thou art the Castilian! Oh! take as a
token
Of Moslem allegiance the homage we bring,
But spare thou the gates of the city unbroken,
I plead for my children as King unto King!"

And back from the valley in lingering sweetness
The glad voices ring from the hills to the sea,

With the echoing song in its joyful completeness,
"Granada is ransomed! Granada is free!"

"Thou singest well! O dusky Arab stranger!"
The monarch said, while eyes tear-dimmed with pity,
Beneath long lashes tremulously gleamed;
"Poor, poor indeed, were Islam's boasted cluster
Of stout-walled cities had it missed the lustre
Of fair Granada by her king redeemed!

"How wrote Mohammed in the days of danger?
'To him who conquers pride, and, for the city,
Humbleth himself, doth victory belong!'
Bring forth the cups with prisoned sunlight shining,
Drink to Alhamar while fair hands are twining
The myrtle-crown for singer and for song!"

Then once again the flash, as glowing embers,
Long-pent and smothered, lit anew the fire
Which in the singer's dusky eyes had burned.
"Take ye your crown with scorn too deep for curses!

Think ye, O haughty Moors, that tinkling verses
Are fitly crowned where prophecies were spurned!

"Perchance the fickle Moslem still remembers
The story, handed down from sire to sire,
Of Aben Hared — blest for aye his name!
The cold, dead past forgetteth not its sorrow,
Though what ye curse to-day, ye praise to-morrow,
For truth is truth, forevermore the same!

"Can great Alhamar's reign be any greater,
In these fair days when Nasar's line is reaping
The glory gathered from his deeds of old?
Can proud fulfillment, looking backward, render
Aught more ennobling, more divinely tender,
Than Aben Hared for your King foretold?

"The scales of justice balance soon or later!
God's dew and sunshine even yet are keeping
The grasses green above the Prophet's bones;
While kingly grace the myrtle-crown has meeted
For gift of song where prophecy was greeted
In years gone by, with cursing and with stones!

"*I from the sons of Hared am descended —*
As ye from Nasar!" — Then with one stern gesture
The singer turned, like some avenging fate;
And 'neath the wan moon faintly drifting o'er them,
Nasar's proud children seemed to see before them
The stark, dead prophet at their city's gate.

So like a ghost whose messages are ended,
The Poet vanished, and his sombre vesture
Fluttered and faded where the darkness moaned, —
The awful darkness which seemed thrilled and beating
With scornful echoes, o'er and o'er repeating: —
"The son of Hared — whom your fathers stoned!"

GLENDARE.

The wild torrents plunge o'er the falls of Glendare,
The cliffs of Glendarock hang high with a frown,
And night from the hill-tops sodden and bare,
In its gray sleety cloak with the storm-wind comes down.

Roy of the Highlands, he hastes from the seas,
But my Lady Glendare no longer can wait;
Like a wan, spectral shape in the shadow she flees,
While the warden sleeps sound at the stout castle-gate.

Faster, oh, faster! my Lady Glendare!
Thy black-hearted lover will close on thee soon!
He rideth behind on the wings of the air,
As the black-hearted tempest rides after the moon.

And faster, my lad, from the free Highland hill!
Let each sail to the winds! let each breath be a prayer!
For her life-blood runs slow and her life-blood runs chill;
She hath beckoned to death — my Lady Glendare!

She heareth the clangor of armor behind,
The tramping of horsemen afar o'er the land,
But never the flapping of sails in the wind,
Or the noise of the keel as it grates on the sand.

The wild torrents plunge o'er the falls of Glendare;
There are horsemen above, there are boatmen below,
But the waters have tangled my lady's bright hair,
Her bosom is cold as the winter's white snow.

She hears not the voice of her brave Highland lad,
She heeds not, she hears not, his wail of despair;
Wrap her deftly, though late, in the bright Scottish plaid —
My sweet, winsome lady, my Lady Glendare!

THE PHANTOM FLAG.

A SPOT far up the mountain,
A strange and awesome place,
With the great deep sky o'erhanging
The narrow, jagged space,
Whence the long, far-reaching valley
Doth wind its way adown
Till the blue skies kiss the greensward,
And the plains with sunlight crown.

A glorious place, where liberty
Shall give her children breath,
Ere she sends them down below to play
The game of life and death.
And the blue-clad, dusty army
In its winding path stood still,
While its glowing pulses trembled
With a wild unearthly thrill.

"Let me shout once more for freedom!"
The color-bearer said:

"I can hear the death-shot rattle,
I can feel the victor's tread!
Look! the battle-spirits gather!
Their hot wings hover near!
When my soul goes up to glory, boys,
I 'll plant the Old Flag here!"

Did ye read, O Union children,
How burst the battle clouds?
Did ye know how fell the hero,
'Neath the holiest of shrouds?
Saw ye far up the mountain
The spectral Stripes and Stars,
When the phantom arm unfurled the flag,
And spread its crimson bars?

To-day the Northbound traveler,
From lips that hold it true,
Still hears the witching story
Of the crimson and the blue;
Of blood-stained folds that floated
O'er the mountain's rocky height,
Of stars that paled with those of heaven
And vanished into night.

And the mountain lad treads softly
  As he guides the cattle home,
Half in fear and half in longing,
  Through the twilight's dusky gloam.
And the pious valley farmer,
  As the sunset pennons wave,
Bows a reverent head and whispers:
  "May the God of battles save!"

WRECKED.

At early dawn,
When first the rays of Orient light
Bid glowing welcome to the star-pale morn
And sweet farewell to night;

When distant seas
Lie blue and dim beyond the emerald bay,
And peaceful wavelets coyly kiss the breeze,
The while in idle play;

When all the earth
Is fresh and brave, our ghostly phantoms flee,
And day renewed to stalwart hope gives birth
In strong reality.

And so the men
Lift up the anchor and unfurl the sails;
"Oh, speed them!" wives and children pray again,
"Ye prosperous gales!"

And with a song
The fisherman goes sailing to the west;
For life is love, and love divinely long;
And life with love is blest.

But with a moan,
The fisher's wife sits sobbing under breath;
For life is love, yet love must die alone,
And loveless life is death.

O sea-gulls gray!
What mean your voices shrilling with despair,
As evening's calm drops o'er the little bay
Beneath the leaden air?

O men with ships,
Who on the deep have journeyed up and down,
Have ye no answer for the questioning lips
Within this quaint old town?

For night has come,
And grim portentous shapes flit wildly by;
And cowering hearts are smitten and grow dumb
In silent agony.

Sweet sleep and deep
God gives to his beloved when life is o'er;
While storm-tossed waves and angry billows sweep
For aye on life's rough shore.

Yet kindly souls,
Sweet Pity's guests, wail o'er the dead to-day:—
Bow down, my heart, where grief's wild torrent rolls,
And for the living pray!

NOT DEAD, BUT SLEEPING.

Beautiful Summer at rest lieth low;
On the bare brown earth she pillowed her head,
And the mourners, moving passive and slow,
Have chanted their requiem over the dead.
Her blue-veined lids are rimmed with frost,
The light has gone from her azure eyes;
The rose from her lips forever is lost,
Stark on the cold dark sod she lies.

The autumn flowers swung out to the breeze
Their gorgeous bloom of yellow and red,
And whispered low to the trees, "O trees!
Let not the world know Summer is dead!"
But the great trees drooped in the dreary spell,
And down from the clouds of molten lead,
The shivering, quivering rain-drops fell,
And night-winds echoed, "Summer is dead!"

Oh, never had Death in all that lie
On his low, damp shrine a form more fair!

Oh, never were flowers so loth to die
As the flowers that died in her sunny hair.
Fall softly, ye winding-sheets of snow,
Fall softly over her lowly bed!
Never was earth so full of woe —
Beautiful Summer is dead — is dead!

Dead? was the Maker mightier when
The new-born stars first gemmed the skies?
Is He shorn of his grace, O children of men,
Who said to the maiden, "Arise, arise?"
The arm of Omnipotence ever keeps
The miracle age renewed in strength:
The maid is not dead! she sleeps — but sleeps,
In fullness of bloom to rise at length.

AFTER THE VICTORY

THE conqueror's song hath a minor key,
The sound of a dirge in its symphony;
The voice grows hoarse with the victor's cry,
There are jarring notes when its echoes die;
"What matter?" comes back in stern reply.
The streams must run if the seas be fed,
Stout hearts be broken, so states are wed!
Red roses are crushed 'neath the soldier's tread,
And the white are scarce enough for the dead.
All rudely heaped in the same low grave,
Are the lovers and sons we gladly gave;
Above them the Stars of the Union wave!
And faint in the sky the war-cloud drips,
While Honor, unsullied, her finger-tips
Places, in peace, upon loyal lips.
May He, who sees with omniscient ken,
After the victory, save! *Amen!*

MERCEDES.

DIED JUNE 26, 1878.

WE saw thee crowned! Love came with royal hands
To thee, Mercedes. All that earth held rare
In precious stuffs, and gems from far-off lands,
They brought for thee; and thou wert young and fair.

So sweet thy fate, the orange blossoms seemed
More blest in every clime on this fair year;
And maidens of their own betrothals dreamed
More tenderly, thy wedding-bells to hear.

Yet all the while, fingers unseen had traced,
Among the stars, thy throne and coronet:—
O sweet young queen, in realms celestial placed,
For thee our eyes with blinding tears are wet!

We cannot see beyond the gates afar,
Nor hear the heavenly symphony's refrain;
We stand appalled where death and sorrow are,
And weep in kinship with the heart of Spain.

THE MEED OF GENIUS.

In the Campo Santo.

These pictures were Benozzo's. His the art
That made all Pisa jubilant, 't is said;
And his reward? Oh! list, expectant heart!
This narrow space where he might rest when dead.

SIMON OF CYRENE.

Unknown, unheralded, yet marked by fate,
From lands afar, he of Cyrene came,
Where mad processions led by men aflame
With rage and cursing, from the city's gate
Drag forth the Christ!
But yesterday, they wait
The Master with glad palms; they shout his name,
They hang upon his lips. To-day, with shame
And scourge, 't is "Crucify!" Then, neither late
Nor soon, chosen of all the world, of loss
Or gain unconscious, though his Lord may die,
The chance Cyrenian comes to bear the cross.
Oh, glorious lot! Oh, blest of passers-by!
Nor earth, nor heaven, through endless ages dim,
Can yield another what was laid on him!

A CHILD'S QUESTION.

"WHAT is it to be dead?" O Life,
Close-held within my own,
What foul breath in the air is rife?
What voice malign, unknown,
Hath dared this whisper faint and dread,
"What is — what is it to be dead?"

Who told you that the song-bird died?
They had no right to say
This to my child — I know we cried
When Robin "went away;"
But this strange thing we never said,
That what we loved so could be dead.

Give me your hands, my only boy!
Health throbs in every vein;
Thou hast not dreamed of earth's alloy,
Nor stepped where guilt has lain;
O sweet young life! O baby breath!
What hast thou now to do with death?

I even framed for thy dear sake
  Anew the childish prayer,
Lest, "If I die before I wake,"
  Should rouse a thought or care.
Mother of Christ, was this a sin —
To watch where death might enter in?

Too late! The Angel of the Flame
  Relentless cries: "Go hence!"
I think of Eden's sin and shame;
  I gaze — on innocence!
And still the curse? Must I arise
And lead my own from Paradise!

I see the wide, the awful world
  Loom up beyond the gate;
I see his pure soul tossed and whirled —
  My child! I pray thee wait!
Ask me not what the Angel saith;
My soul this day hath tasted death!

DOLOROSA.

MADONNA, hallowed with thy weight of woe,
We stricken mothers turn our souls to thine;
We lift our faces where thy pure eyes shine,
And wonder if it eased thy grief to know
Thy son, the Christ — the dead Christ — was divine!

Mother of Sorrow! Ah, but didst thou know?
God gave us each our children, and we call
Them ours, our own! How then could it befall
That in thy motherhood thou loved us so
Thou gavest Him, thy Babe, to die for all!

Now thou art crowned! And yet for mortal sake,
In sympathy ineffable, sublime,
Thy tears fall earthward from the heavenly clime.
O sainted Grief! may thy sad heart not break,
Forever laden with the woes of time!

HALLOWELL BELLS.

THE warm winds sweep from the south to-night,
The breath of the springtime fills the air;
Of odorous firs on the wooded height,
Of burning boughs in the gardens bare.

Up the river's bank, o'er the grassy dells,
Now soft, now loud, with a sad refrain,
There cometh the music of distant bells, —
"To-morrow," they say, "'t will rain, 't will rain!"

O grass-grown dells, ye are newly green,
O bells, ye are far and faintly sweet,
But I think of a strip of sod between
Two violet banks, while the winds repeat

Over and over the strain they bring,
The rhythmic legend of olden years;
"When ye hear the bells of Hallowell ring,
'T will rain!" and my eyes are filled with tears.

O Hallowell bells! we need not stay
To ask of the morrow, "Foul or bright?"
Our faint hearts sink with the dying day;
The clouds grow heavy! It rains to-night!

BE MERCIFUL TO ME.

My lady lingers at her shrine
On bended knee, on bended knee;
I hear her pray, "O Christ divine,
For devious, wandering ways of mine,
Be merciful to me!"

I see her fold, childlike and fair,
Her stainless hands, her stainless hands,
And ask that they be cleansed to wear
The signet-seal God's children bear,
At his commands.

I hear her plead with eyelids wet,
"O Heart of all, O Heart of all!
For sin that doth our souls beset,
Wilt thou in thy great love not let
Forgiveness fall!"

I should not dare, O Saints most sweet,
To lift my eyes, to lift my eyes,

At her pure shrine, nor hold it meet
To kneel where she hath led my feet
In mute surprise.

But if there need be pardoning grace
For such as she, for such as she,
Oh, when thou bendest low thy face,
Dear Christ, from out the holy place,
Be merciful to me!

CHRISTMAS ROSES.

When the slow dying year in silence reposes,
Close to his chilly heart, under the snow,
Nestle the flowers we call Christmas roses,
Born of the midwinter's passionate throe.

Up on the mountain-side, midst the dead grasses,
Low at the feet of the firs in the vale,
Kissed by the winds from the sunny south passes,
Blown by the breath of the fierce northern gale,

Ever thou springest in magical splendor,
O miracle-blossom, perfect and pure;
Daring thy destiny, brave and yet tender,
Strong to resist and as strong to allure.

And thou art a Christmas rose, O my white flower!
Cold is the outer world! Whence dost thou bring

Warmth that is richer than summer's rare dower,
Airs that are sweeter than perfumes of spring?

How is the smile born of dearth and of sorrow?
Whence has life's blessedness wrought out its claim?
I gaze in thy glad eyes to-day, yea, to-morrow,
And read there thine answer forever the same.

Keep, then, the nosegay of fair Christmas posies,
Plucked from the breast of the midwinter snows;
Life has no secret but nature discloses;
Mine is the lesson, sweet; thine is the rose!

THE WORLD'S VERDICT.

At youth's glad morn, when o'er the shining plain
No shadows fell to dim life's roseate glow,
Toying with grief, the singer feignèd woe,
And sang to men a melancholy strain.
So merry maskers, for sweet pity's sake,
Paused in the revel and let fall a tear;
Aghast they stood while passed the phantom bier,
And cried, "Oh, list! some lone, sad heart doth break!"

When sorrows came, not softly one by one,
As shades at twilight on a day serene,
But tempest-tost with not a ray between
The drifts of darkness deepening into night;
When from the singer's soul, by torture wrung,
Escaped in accents keen one bitter wail,
The kind world mused, and said: "A plaintive tale!
And yet, good masters, is it not o'ersung?"

THE OLD HOMESTEAD.

Substantial and square and roomy,
It stands on the hillside green,
And the giant elm-trees guard it,
While sifting down between

The woof of their netted branches,
The sunbeams flit and fall,
Or the drift of the tangled shadows
Tenderly drapes the wall.

'T is the old familiar homestead;
Its doors stand open wide;
One looks to the light of morning
And one to the sunset side;

But cometh the guest from the eastward,
Or cometh he from the west,
The broad hall gives its welcome,
Its welcome and its rest.

The farmer sits at the threshold,
In the prime of his manhood still;

He has wrestled with toil, and conquered
By the might of his hand and will.

He looks abroad o'er the valleys
Where the tawny cattle graze;
On the hay-fields green for the mowing;
And thinks of the olden days,

When the pastures were rough with stubble,
Lichen and stalk and stone;
When the meadow-lands were but marshes
With worthless weeds o'ergrown.

Now broad are the fertile acres,
And deep is the clover-bloom;
And the great barns wait for its coming
To sweeten their silent gloom.

And away to the south are the orchards
By dew and the sunshine fed,
Till the apples grow round and mellow,
Russet and gold and red;

Red-ripe and russet and golden,
They fall in the grasses fair,
And the sound of their monotone music
Throbs on the exquisite air.

And sweeping afar are the grain-fields
Wind-tossed into silvery spray,
And circled by woodland and forest,
Sombre and old and gray.

While beyond it all is the picture,
Burned deep in the sunset dyes,
The shores in the purpling distance,
Close in whose shadow lies —

The stretch of beautiful water,
A molten shimmering plain,
The lake — but one of the thousand
That mirror the hills of Maine!

What wonder the eyes of the farmer
Grow dim with the trace of tears!
Here is bread for his children's children,
And warmth on his hearth for years.

Here is richness and health and beauty,
Blessings that never shall cease;
Within and without abideth
The plenteousness of peace.

O State beloved of the Pine Tree,
We pledge thee our troth again!

'T is the struggle with thy stern nature
That makes us women and men.

The olden paradox brightens,
Thy barrenness is our health;
Thy granite heart is our glory;
Thy poverty is our wealth.

Dip low the old-time well-sweep,
Hallowed with sun and with rain.
Let us drink, with lips that are loyal,
One toast: To the homes of Maine!

AVE ET VALE.[1]

SHRINED in our hearts, forever fair, there stands
A pillared temple rising to the sun;
Not grander were the courts of Eastern lands,
Not prouder was the peerless Parthenon.

Here open vistas led through all the earth,
Here Knowledge sat enthroned with starry crown;
Here all the glorious dreams of youth had birth;
Here let the heavens their solemn secrets down.

O happy temple on the sloping hill,
We hear afar thy softly ringing bell,
And send, in answer, words that throb and thrill, —
Ave et vale! Greeting and farewell!

[1] Written on the remodeling of the old Hallowell Academy, founded in 1791.

Farewell! unto the old familiar gates,
The stately columns and the halls of yore;
Hail! to the newly risen fane that waits
With all the future beckoning at the door.

Hail! to the tread of countless eager feet
That come and go the symphony to swell;
Hail and farewell! unto the phantoms sweet,
That haunt thy shades, belovèd Hallowell.

Fair, olden city, on the river's shore,
Thou through a measured century hast kept
The grand inheritance our fathers bore,
When to thy wilds across the seas they swept.

And prized with liberty of life and faith,
Thy honored schools their proud traditions tell,
Long mayst thou hear the echoing strain that saith:
Ave et vale! Greeting and farewell!

MIGNON.

O WONDROUS Mignon! thou who never wert,
  Yet strangely art, and evermore shalt be,
While throbs the deep, inevitable hurt
  That links thy young soul with humanity!

We know thy witching, half-repellent grace
  That ever lures and never satisfies;
The weird, elusive beauty of thy face,
  The nameless charm within thy tender eyes.

Only the child of genius and of art,
  The rare creation of the master's brain!
Yet still in life thou hast a living part;
  A crownless queen, thou rulest thy domain.

From out the happy Southlands thou didst
    come,
  Glad as the sun — gay child of want and
    woe —
With song and music, until smitten dumb
  By love's supreme, unconquerable throe.

Then mute, unselfish, passionately grand,
Thy woman's soul o'erleaped its worthless aim;
Thy love and longing spread through every land;
Thou gav'st to hopeless, hapless love a name.

Mignon! The birds, the flowers, the soft winds call;
We hear thy step while shine the stars o'erhead;
Mignon! the shadows of the Northland fall;
Hushed is the music, and the dancer — dead!

O love's undying, unrequited breath!
Thou wert called "Mignon" in the Poet's lore;
O longing infinite, e'en after death!
Thou still art "Mignon" through the evermore.

BECALMED.

I.

"Listen!" he said, "the bells are ringing,
Bells of the city under the sea!
Sit in the silence! Ocean is bringing
A hint of its awful mystery.
Have ye not heard of the sunken city
Down in the underland fathoms below?
Over its towers the sea-weed is waving,
Dank in its streets the mosses grow.
Sprites of the water-realm fair and immortal
Under its sea-green arches sing —
Listen!" he said; "the bells are ringing!
Only the mermen see them swing."

And the good ship lay becalmed on the ocean;
Lazily swung each canvas fold;
All the sky was a golden glory,
All the sea was shimmering gold.
Ah! the dreamy, tremulous motion!
The long waves come and the long waves go.

Ah! the holy calm of the night-watch
After the sunset's ambient glow!
The stars look down from the great deep heavens;
And the weather-bronzed sailor whispering tells
His strange, weird tale of the sunken city;
And lists for the sound of the phantom bells.

II.

That, my lad, was in days of the bygone,
Dead in the past ere my locks were white,
Or my eyes were dim with a life-long looking
Unto the sunset's welcome light.
Peacefully now the white-tipped billows
Hush the sound of their angry strife;
Patient, I wait the call of the night-watch,
Wait, becalmed, on the sea of life.
Let me gaze o'er the storm-scarred railing
Into the blue of the soundless deep!
Where is my white sea-lily blooming?
Answer, beloved, from thy silent sleep!

Is thy moss-bed soft in the sea-dells dreamy?
Do golden curls with the sea-weed twine?
Canst thou gaze afar through the pale green twilight,

Lit by the silver star-flower's shine?
Dost thou catch the gleam of my life's last sunset,
Purple and amber, crimson and gold?
Canst thou lift the clasp of the heavenly portal
Over the curtain's shadowy fold?
God's stars look down from the great deep heavens;
They sing together again for joy —
What do I hear as I sit in the silence?
The bells of a sunken city, boy!

WILL IT BE THUS?

How oft, escaping from some troubled dream,
With stifled sob and eyelids strangely wet,
We hail with joy the morn's assuring gleam,
And smile and quite forget!

Will it be thus when waking after death,
The horror fades that we had known erewhile?
When all life's struggle ends in one glad breath,
Shall we forget and smile?

NOCTURNE.

Blue-gray the sea,
Ink-blue the sky,
Above one glimmering star:
And the sullen surge,
In a measured dirge,
Thunders across the bar.

A sea-gull's cry,
From far, from high,
Falls like a dying wail;
While the beacon-track
Of the star burns black,
In the wake of a lurid sail.

What stroke? What bell?
No soul can tell,
For the dread and the horror born
Of the clamorous heart of the throbbing deep;—
But its mighty pulses rhythm keep,
And the ship rides safe at morn!

NOVEMBER SUNSHINE.

FROM the steel-gray North, the chill winds blow;
Withered and sere the leaves are lying,
Torn from the birch-tree's rustling cloak,
The purpling boughs of the sombre oak,
And the scarlet maples, dying, dying.

Prithee, O maiden, come out to me!
Beyond the clouds so dull and leaden,
The west grows warm with a golden tinge,
Flashes and gleams through the jagged fringe,
Where the sunset ashes redden, redden.

So breathe but a breath from thy fragrant lips,
Step but a foot on the sodden grasses,
Give but a glance from thy girlish eyes,
And out of these chill, autumnal skies
The gruesome shadow passes, passes.

Could I but keep thee so young, so fair,
Know that thy smile would vanish never,
There were no winter, nor wind, nor woe,
Dearth of flowers, nor blight of snow,
But life in the Summer-lands forever.

ONCE AND AGAIN.

I.

Oh! once when our love was new,
Do you remember, my own,
How we swung on a mountain lakelet blue,
'Mid the forest still and lone,
While the mirrored sky went drifting by,
Through realms celestial blown?

Swung dreamily to and fro,
As the shimmering waters curled
Around our prow and the heavens hung low,
And the hills shut out the world? —
O world, thou wert far away that day,
And our untried sails were furled.

II.

Be still, O passionate heart,
Whilst we number the days since then!
Come, Friend of my life, once more apart
From the clamorous ways of men!

As we count the years through our smiles and
tears,
Let us drift with the waves again!

For the mountain lakes stand high
In the land where our souls have been;
We float where the gates of heaven are nigh,
Where the world may not come in;
And I dream of no greater bliss than this —
Save that which we die to win!

ATTAINMENT.

To the north, the stars; to the south, the stars;
above heaven's vaulted ring;
And from east to west, with unerring quest, the
constellations swing.
I see the endless, shining track, where the
Chariot rolls afar;
Where Perseus guards, with his flaming sword,
the gates of the Polar Star.

And ever the mighty Hercules, with an arm up-
lifted, kneels,
As round in his glittering, sinuous course, the
writhing Serpent reels;
And the luminous Virgin slowly glides, her
white wings folded fast,
Till the burning heart of the Scorpion hides
with its baleful light outcast.

The clamor of earth is hushed; no breath
sweeps in from the misty seas;

The leaves hang mute in the lofty tower, above
the clambering trees;
Beneath, from the oriole's lonely nest, no glad,
or dolorous note;
But perfumes faint, with a vague unrest, through
the open arches float.

I gaze in awe at the blazing dome where the
throes of time have birth,
And the nightly Passion Play unfolds o'er the
unresponsive earth;
And yet I feel the sentient thrill of life through
the vastness whirled;
The onward, sure, resistless force, of the ever-
circling world.

The hidden pulse of humanity is palpitant,
strong and deep,
Though night and death, with their semblant
charms, the senses lull in sleep;
And I mark the space from star to star by the
breadth of a finite span;
I measure the grasp of the Infinite by the
touch divine in man;

And know that the spirit's mysteries are solved
in each human soul;
And the beauty of perfectness must be its crown
at the final goal;
So long as the marvelous heavens above bend
over an earthly sod,
And the immanent heart of the universe is one
with the Soul of God.

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